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OBSERVATIONS

IN ANSWER TO

MR. THOMAS PAINE'S

"AGE OF REASON."

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM JACKSON

NOW A PRISONER IN THE NEW-PRISON, DUBLIN;
ON A CHARGE OF HIGH-TREASON.

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TO
PROTESTANTS, CATHOLICS,
PROTESTANT-DISSENTERS,
AND
CHRISTIANS OF EVERY DENOMINATION;
THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS
ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.



OBSERVATIONS
ON
MR. THOMAS PAINE'S
"AGE OF REASON."

I Was at the house of a friend at Paris, when Mr. Paine happened to pay him a visit, and among other discourse, he addressed me thus: "I am writing a book against all Revealed Religion; it is nothing but nonsense and imposition." My answer was, "I am sure, Mr. Paine, you are a man of too good an understanding to write on any subject you are not thoroughly acquainted with, and I shall be very glad to read your book." As soon as I heard of the publication of this book in England and Ireland, I endeavoured to procure a sight of it; and only ten days ago I obtained a copy: it is entitled, "THE AGE OF REASON." After a perusal, I found in it so much of ignorance and misrepresentation on a subject of infinite importance to mankind, that I set about and finished the following

lowing observations. If they should be deemed of any weight, I could not better have employed my time; if not, coming as they do, warm from the heart, the intention will excuse the attempt.

Mr. Paine begins his work by making a profession of his religious faith; by telling us what he does, and what he does not believe. He is moved to this by several of his "colleagues and fellow citizens of France having done the same*." Mr. Paine ~~must~~ think this his profession of some consequence to the world, or he would not have published it. He wishes to be a creed-maker for others as well as himself; in which there is not a little of human vanity. The belief or disbelief of Mr. Paine, are matters which concern himself alone. They neither can nor ought to have any weight with mankind, unless supported by irresistible evidence.

Having stated the several articles of his creed, method required an immediate recourse to proofs, to substantiate those articles. Mr. Paine knew the advantage of proceeding immethodically. By representing the relations in the Jewish and Christian books as ridiculous fables; and, vulgarly descanting on their absurdity, he artfully endeavoured to predispose the multitude in favor of the opinions

* Page 1, "Age of Reason."

opinions he was about to inculcate, that his weak objections might the better pass for unanswerable arguments. In the second page of his book he says, "the Jewish, Christian and Turkish churches, each shew certain books which they call Revelation, or the Word of God." Mr. Paine denies the position. There is not, according to him, any such thing as revelation. After this denial, he should directly have proceeded to refute by evidence, the premisses he had denied. Instead of which, the eight first pages of his work are occupied in treating the whole story of Judaism and Christianity, as a romance; Eve, Satan, and the Apple; Moses, Mahomet, Mary, and Joseph, were all alike, deceptions and deceivers. Our belief has no foundation. It is hearsay upon hearsay. Our religion is "a theory sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology". A story miserably worked up, with every mark of fraud and imposition stamped on the face of it †. and, "it is impossible to conceive a story more derogatory to the Almighty, more inconsistent with his wisdom, more contradictory to his Power, than this story is ‡."

The existence of a system thus inconsistent, derogatory, and contradictory, seems in itself a most extraordinary matter. Mr. Paine however, thus accounts

* Page 4, "Age of Reason." † Page 6. ‡ Page 7.

accounts for it. " Jesus Christ existed, preached
 " good morality, and the equality of Man.
 " Preached against the avarice and corruption
 " of the Jewish priests. Was accused of sedition.
 " Suspected by the Roman government, and be-
 " tween the two powers, Jewish and Roman,
 " this virtuous reformer and revolutionist, lost
 " his life *." It is upon this plain narrative of
 " facts, together with another case, that the
 " *Christian Mythologists* calling themselves the
 " Christian church, have erected their fable *." Here is Mr. Paine's origin of Christianity; on which I offer the following observations.

No such thing as a Christian church existed in the life-time of Jesus Christ. He had disciples who considered him as the Messias promised in the Jewish scriptures, and the coming of whom was universally expected about the time of his birth. On the third day after his crucifixion, and interment, comes the story of the resurrection; asserted on the sensible evidence of several of those who had attached themselves to Christ, whilst living. The ascension is, in a similar manner, as positively affirmed by the same description of men. Here then are the leading articles of christianity, believed and maintained before the existence of any Christian church; neither was there any such thing

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* Page 8, " Age of Reason."

as a church system formed: even the term "Christian" was unknown, when what we now understand by christianity, was first believed; it did not, therefore, originate from a Christian church. As little were Christian mythologists the "erectors of the fable." The first proselytes made by Christ, were mostly fishermen; as ignorant of mythology, as Mr. Paine appears to be of the origin of the religion he so vehemently attacks. All the followers of Jesus, in his life-time, were Jews, necessarily precluded, by their religion, from knowing any thing about the mythologic fables of the Gentiles: such kind of learning was interdicted among them; to have pursued it, would have been a species of idolatry. The law, as delivered through the intermediate agency of Moses, formed the belief and study of the Jewish youth; and the observance of the precepts contained in that law, their duty. Neither Greek nor Roman literature were in vogue among the Jews. Paul appears to have known something of that learning, from his quoting one of the Greek poets; but this was a particular instance. The original believers in Christ, as the Messiah, on whose testimony cotemporaries believed, not having the sensible evidence the former averred they had, were, from their religion, their obscure conditions, their poverty, and consequent circumscribed educations, total strangers to Heathen mythology; to affirm that such mythology furnished the system
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of christianism, is as false in point of fact, as it is to ascribe the erection of the "fable" of our religion to a christian church that did not exist. Starting such positions shews, either that a man is ignorantly misled himself, or that he wilfully endeavours to mislead others. The latter cannot be supposed to be the case with Mr. Paine; we must, therefore, wave all censure, and say only, that he is mistaken.

If, contrary to what is asserted, the first "erectors of the christian fable" were neither mythologists, nor formed into a church, let us examine how the case stood with the next succession of believers, after the deaths of all the primitive "erectors." In this succession, we find a set of men styled the fathers. We have the writings of several of those persons entire; the fragments of others. We have the epistles of Polycarp, who was cotemporary, and personally acquainted with the apostle John. We have Papias who conversed with Polycarp, Ignatius and others*. These, with the rest of the believers, living at the same time, may be said to have formed a christian church. Is it out of this church that the fable arose? As it was not erected by the first christians, were the fathers, who succeeded them, the erectors of it? Were they profound mythologists,

* Vide "Cave's Lives of the Fathers."

gifts, skilled in all the " battles of Jupiter and the
 " giants, the confinement of the latter in the
 " volcano of mount *Ætna* * ?" A reference to
 their writings and to the history of their lives,
 will convince any man of the contrary. They
 were persons of great piety and little learning. Of
 a simplicity of manners which accorded with their
 professions : austere devout, secluded from the
 world, and actually considering themselves as
 strangers and pilgrims on earth. They were
 reproached with their ignorance of human learn-
 ing ; and they gloried in being ignorant of what
 they considered as profane. Such characters,
 therefore, although forming a Christian church,
 did not erect the fable, nor support it, when
 erected, by the mythology of the Gentiles, the
 study of which they would have considered as im-
 piety. Hence not a syllable on the subject is to
 be found in their writings, as connected with any
 part of the Christian faith. In latter times, when
 Origen † and others, defended the Christian fable,
 as a solemn truth on which their comfort and fu-
 ture happiness depended, they had no recourse to
 Heathen mythology as an auxiliary to their sys-
 tem ; they decried Gentilism and the mummary
 composing it. The learning of Origen was of a
 very different species ; it was of the Eastern kind,
 imbibed at Alexandria ; then the celebrated resort
 of

* Page 6, " Age of Reason."

† Vide " Origen contra Celsum."

of learned men, and also famous for a magnificent library.

It turns out, then, that Mr. Paine's account of the fabrication of the Christian fable, is not true. The first erectors were Jews, to whom Gentile mythology was unknown. They did not form a Christian church. Their immediate successors were persons, styled, The Fathers, who were not mythologists; deeming it impiety to study such matters. They congregated for devotional purposes, and so may be said to have formed a church; but Heathen stories were excluded in totality. More learned men in succeeding ages never referred to Pagan fictions in support of Christian truths. The foundation, therefore, of the fable must be looked for in another bottom. So far from mythology serving as the foundation, it is not even a stone in the center arch of the building.

But, suppose, for the sake of liberal argument, all this not the case. Suppose a few Jewish fishermen to have been great mythologists. They made no use of their knowledge; for what analogy is there between Pagan tales, and the resurrection of Jesus: that is asserted as a fact unconnected with the religious system of any nation. Several persons affirm most positively that they saw, handled, and conversed with, the very man

man alive, whom three days before they had seen dead and entombed. They say farther, that this man, after passing forty days among them, and many others on earth, disappeared from their presence at a certain time and place, and that they beheld him in the actual state of ascension. Is there any thing of antient mythology in the story of the ascension, more than in that of the resurrection? There certainly is not. Mythology, then, if known, was not made use of. The truth is, that Mr. Paine writes at random. He has picked up something of mythologic History, which Tooke's Pantheon, or any similar school-book, would furnish him with; and, thus stocked, he blends Gentile fables and Jewish truths, Pagan reveries with just theology, and this strange commixture he works up into a principle, and reasons on it after a manner of his own. He makes now and then a capital mistake in points relative to antiquity; but what are a few blunders, when the object in view is the entire overthrow of every religious system under heaven? The greatness of the end should excuse all inaccuracies in the means. Hence, when this author asserts that "The fable of Jupiter and the giants, was told many hundred years before that of satan*," he is guilty of an anachronism which would blast the credit of any other writer; in Mr. Paine it is only a slight error,

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* Page 6, "Age of Reason."

ror, proceeding from some chasm in the confused order of his ideas on these subjects. Did this unmerciful enemy to all revealed religion never hear of the Hebrew bible; Does he know that it is confessedly the most antient book existing? The satanic fable is related in that book. It is from thence the Christian mythologists borrowed whatever account they gave, or knew, of satan. The whole is of Jewish origin. And how a fable, manifestly contained in the scripture of the Jews, can be said to start into existence several hundred years posterior in time to Grecian and Roman analogous stories, I leave The Age of Reason to explain. Until this be done, we shall have a right to believe that Abraham lived before Pythagoras; even though Mr. Paine should think proper to assert the contrary.

As, in point of chronology, the fable of Jupiter could not have existed before that of Satan, so neither did it in point of fact; for the Jews, and other nations coeval with, and derived from them, were wholly unacquainted with that fable. The Phœnicians, who were originally Canaanites, expelled by Joshua *, knew nothing of Jupiter; Their mythology was quite of a different kind.

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* See "Gale's Court of the Gentiles," three volumes small quarto. In which the several most antient nations are traced by etymology, learning, language and customs, up to the earliest Jews.

The same of the Ægyptians. Not stories about gods, battles and volcanos, but hieroglyphic animals, representing the several powers of the material heavens, formed their mystic theology. The remotest antiquity being nearest the time of the earliest Jews, we find a variety of their customs, and many of their doctrines prevailing by tradition. The Greeks and Romans were, comparatively speaking, moderns, living according to the Christian phrase, "in the Last Times." Their mythology was, of course, tradition on tradition, infinitely corrupted. Passing through a variety of foul mediums, it became at last impurity itself. Such, however, as it was, it may be easily pursued through the darkness of ignorance to the light from whence it sprang. Disfigured as the offspring is, the features of the parent are yet discernible. Mr. Paine, probably, from being unaccustomed to speculations of the kind, mistakes the offspring for the parent.

Thus, having erred in making a modern fable older than an antient one, Mr. Paine proceeds to amuse himself with the latter, as proceeding from the former. Adopting the maxim, that ridicule is the test of truth, he tries his hand at the business. Like another Aristophanes, he attempts a Socrates after his fashion. Satan he brings forward as the hero of the piece. The place, a garden. The action, one and entire, that of tempt-

ing a weak woman to eat an apple ; and the time, the fluxular period necessary to bring about the catastrophe. Thus arranging the scenic part, and arming himself with ridicule at all points, Mr. Paine begins, but he begins by a blunder similar to that we have recently detected ; for he makes the “ Christian mythologists introduce “ satan into the Garden of Eden, in the shape of “ a snake or a serpent*.” So that the third chapter of Genesis was written by Christian mythologists ! Probably Jesus Christ himself was the author of it. I would advise Mr. Paine to assert this in some future edition of his book. It will render the fable still more ridiculous when the account of the author of it is a falsity. If Mr. Paine, however, will not accept of Christ as the author, we will suppose his *Christian mythologists* to have been the men. They must have been wonderfully long lived ! at the least sixteen hundred years old when they died, for those parts of the Jewish Scriptures ascribed to Moses as the author, are fixed at nearly that æra. As we are at liberty to conjecture, and that the subject is only a fable, who knows but the Christian mythologists lived in Ægypt, and were the instructors of Moses ! they might teach him something about the † “ Tail of the Heathen mythology ;” and he, in return, might lecture them on the head of magic. Thus mutually enlightening each other, and

* Page 7, “ Age of Reason.”

† *Ibid*, Page 4.

and assisting to invent a most improbable tale, they writ the third chapter of Genesis out of a frolic to laugh at mankind. I think this is as good an account of the origin of the fable, as that of Mr. Paine—I am sure it is as true.

From the authors, it is now full time that we should *pass on* to the Old and New Testament. This is Mr. Paine's account of them. "The church mythologists having established their system, collected all the writings they could find, and managed them as they pleased. It is a matter of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear, under the name of the Old and New Testament, are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them, or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up *."

According to this account, the canon of the Jewish scriptures was settled by a Christian church. It is impossible that this should have been the case, while such a people as the Jews were existing in the world. Those people are, and always have been, scrupulously tenacious, not only of the books, but of the letters of their scriptures. To add or take away an iota of their writings, incurred an heavy curse on him who did, or suffered

* Page 9, "Age of Reason."

ferred it to be done. Would they, therefore, take the canon as settled by Christians, if it did not accord with their own? Were they not capable of determining what, and how many of their books were genuine, and as such to be received by their people? Conformable to their religion, they could not receive their scriptures from the hands of a Christian church; and as they could not, so the fact is, that they did not. The Jewish canon was settled by the Jews, ages before the Christian mythologists, as Mr. Paine calls them, existed. This canon was afterwards finally settled by Esdras, and the authenticity of it established. The Septuagint translation was finished in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus; that was a translation of the Jewish scriptures into Greek. Those scriptures, therefore, then existed in a collection, were placed in a series of chronological order, and their canon recognized. The seventy translators were Jews. They would not have translated from a code containing any books unsanctioned by the Judaic faith. The canon of Esdras was their ground-work; as such they acknowledged it. This happening in the time of one of the Ptolemys, Mr. Paine has only to consult chronology, to know how long it was before those Christian mythologists lived, who, according to him, settled the canon of the Old as well as New Testament. It is really a pity that
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he has not read at least one author on the subject he writes about.

Employing his mythologists to do what the Jews had done ages before they were born, Mr. Paine proceeds to examine the external, and internal evidence, for believing the books of the Old Testament to be the word of God. The first he cuts very short by an affirmation, "We have no other external evidence than what I have mentioned" (the *Christian church mythologists*) "and that is no evidence at all *." He is right in his conclusion, but wrong in his premisses. The Christian church mythologists are not any external evidence of the books of the Old Testament being the word of God, but it is error to say there is not any other external evidence. The Jews themselves existing as they do, and for ages have done, form a body of external evidence of some little weight. Beside this, does Mr. Paine infer from the silence of the Jews, that they have not any thing to say in defence of the sacredness of their books? Does he know any thing of their learning, or their writings on the Old Testament? Did he ever hear of their Talmud, their Targums, their Chaldee paraphrase, or their Rabbinical authors †? If he has heard of such literature

* Page 9, "Age of Reason."

† There are two Talmuds; the Jerusalem, and the Babylonish. The first was compiled soon after Christ, the second much

ture and such men, he must know that a great deal of external evidence has been offered in proof of the books of the Old Testament being, what the Jews deem, a rich depositum entrusted to their nation by God. But the fact is, that the Jews are not like the Christians, perpetually cavilling on the subject; ringing new changes on old objections; and for ever answering the same dull arguments which have been hackneyed, under various modes, through every author from Porphyry to Mr. Paine. The point with respect to the Jews is decided. They long ago contended for the evidence in proof of their books, and there has the matter rested. They smile at the objections of Christians as futilities antiently refuted. They have the law of Moses enrolled in their synagogues, without the Masoretic punctuation; this law they read in portions every sabbath day; and they firmly believe it to have been handed down to them from Moses, through the successive act of their ancestors in a series. This surely constitutes thousands of witnesses in every age

much later. I forget the æra of either. The Talmuds are comments on the Mishnah, which is a complete collection of Jewish traditions, the most antient. There are two Chaldee paraphrases; one of Onkelos, the other of Jonathan; both stated to have been written before the time of Christ. The Rabbinical writers among the Jews, published to a certainty seven hundred years ago. They writ in explanation and defence of their bible.

age for thousands of years, bearing their solemn testimony to the authenticity and sacredness of certain books, in which a communication from Jehovah to man, is asserted as the grand leading event. The principal mistake made by disbelieving writers in later times has been, their attacking a revelation which they did not understand. They object to writings which they cannot read. They abuse books without knowing a letter contained in them. Instead of arguing they dogmatize, and they calumniate what they do not comprehend. The Hebrew scriptures should be a little studied in the original, before we pronounce on them. We can neither see their object, scope, nor tendency, through the English translation. It is in many respects a false, in every respect a faulty medium. So far from assisting our mental vision, it grossly obstructs it; and one fatal error it leads us into, which is, that of ascribing to the original the imperfections of the copy. This would be deemed unfair in the case of a common classic author; it surely is less excusable in the case of books laying claim to sacred origin.

Mr. Paine, excluding external evidence by denying it, goes on to scrutinize the internal evidence contained in the books themselves; but having previously mentioned revelation, without letting us know what he understood by the term,

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he now gives his definition of it. "Revelation" is a communication of something, which the "person, to whom the thing is revealed, did not know before*." This is derogatory to the subject. The superintendant of a nursery may communicate something to the children, which they did not know before. This would be revelation, according to Mr. Paine. The tales of ghosts in a country church-yard, related in the language of rustic simplicity, to hearers who knew them not before, are revelations. Every thing which we did not previously know, is revelation when communicated to us. Here the distinction is either forgotten or overlooked. The reciprocal communications of our species with each other, on subjects of which they were relatively ignorant, are informations concerning matters which there is a competency in the human intellect to comprehend. It is otherwise with revelation considered as a communication from the Deity to man. Here the definition of Mr. Paine will not apply. It is not only that the adorable Author of our existence tells us something which we did not know before; but he tells us that which could no otherwise be known than by a communication from him. Man never did, and as he never did, it is presumeable that he never could by his natural investigation, arrive at this point

* Page 9, "Age of Reason."

point, the specific agency of God in the creation of matter. Ancient cosmogony has been no more than conjecture; system constructed on system, mutilated scraps of tradition furnishing the pillars, and fancy, or ingenuity, working up the structure*. The earliest of the Grecian sages gathered from the Ægyptians whatever of tradition remained among those people, and mixing what they thus borrowed, with guesses and imaginations of their own, they became world-makers. Not two of them, however, could agree about the creation of matter, or the first principles of things. Some strenuously asserted the eternity of matter; others as strenuously denied it. Water, by one sage, was represented as the first principle; another contended for the priority of fire; and a third slipped in a plea in behalf of his favourite element, air†. Mingled with these reveries, glimmerings of the truth are discoverable. The Ægyptian traditions were corruptions of Jewish knowledge. These were carried into Greece by the earliest philosophers, as they are called, of that country; who all visited Ægypt for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. It was the fashion of the times to travel thither. Hence we find Thales, Pythagoras, and the rest, returning to their country with mental cargoes of what

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* Vide, First Volume of the Ancient Universal History.

† Stanley's Lives of the Philosophers.

they had picked up in Ægypt; which they worked into systems, and promulgated in their different schools*. Putting their theology aside, the cosmogony of these men, as well as that of all others of whom we have any knowledge, may be traced to the Genesis of the Jews; if that be a fable, it has at least the merit of originality to recommend it.

Let us now examine, whether there be any internal evidence in support of revelation, as being something communicated by God to man, which he could not otherwise become acquainted with. "At the beginning GOD† created the matter of the Heavens and the earth." None but God could be the author of that sentence. It reveals to man that which without such revelation he never could attain. His powers are insufficient for the discovery. Consult the records of time from the earliest account of it, to the present period, and point out the individual unaided by tradition of

* See a very excellent book, entitled, "An Inquiry after Philosophy and Theology, tending to shew from whence mankind came to a knowledge of those two important points." One volume octavo.

† The word here rendered "God," is in the Hebrew plural, not meaning a plurality of gods; but plural the word is. See "Parkhurst's and Bate's Hebrew Lexicons." "Holloway's Originals." "Duncan Forbes's Works," two volumes twelves. He was president of the court of session in Scotland. See also "Calafios Concordance," last edition.

of some kind or other, who has come forward with this single fact. Where there is tradition, there is derivative knowledge, however obscured or corrupted; and, derived knowledge excludes the idea of primæval discovery. The positive information that the matter of the Heavens and the Earth was created by God, at the commencement of time, could not have come from man, because man could not know what passed at the creation. God only could communicate the fact; and if it were asked, who is the God, the creator of the world? the answer is, the author of revelation. A miracle could not prove it against him.

Connected with this secret, of matter having been willed into existence by the Deity, which he only could divulge, we have an account of the formation of the mundane system; of the agents employed in settling, disposing, separating, the several elements of which the chaotic fluid mass was compounded*. Here, again, is irresistible internal evidence. Could man give an account of the formation of the world? No more than he could of the creation of matter. He was present at neither. He was not in existence. "True, says Mr. Paine; but this might be conjecture. There have been a variety of world-makers." There have, indeed, been millions of imaginers, like himself, on the subject. But what

* See "Catcott on the Deluge."

what if the Jewish account of the formation of the mundane system, be philosophically true; in that case surely disbelief must yield to demonstration. Now, Mr. Paine may not have heard that this matter has undergone a thorough discussion, and that men, perfectly acquainted with the original scripture, as well as intimately versed in the mechanism of nature, have traced the Mosaic account of the formation, and they have demonstrated it to be philosophically just. What the several properties of matter are; that it can only act by contact*; that it has no power to attract or repel; but, that attraction, repulsion, gravitation, are effects caused by mechanical agents, which are described in the Mosaic cosmogony, and their various operations, first in forming the universe, and now in carrying on the mechanism of it; all this is contained in the Genesis of the bible†. It has been drawn, like truth out of a well, where it was antiently said to lie hidden.

And,

• See a work entitled “ a treatise on Power Essential and Mechanical.” Octavo.

† A latin piece under this title, “ Tractatus in quo Tentatur conamen, Recuperandi Veteris Philosophiæ, notitiam.”

Moses's Principia, part 1.

A “ Philosophical translation of the two first chapters of “ Genesis.” Octavo.

“ Creation the ground-work of revelation.”

Not having been able to procure one of these books, I can only generally refer to them as containing illustrative proofs of the positions above advanced.

And, after all, is it any thing extraordinary that the only true account of the creation and formation of this system, should be given by the author of it? From man it could not come. If a true account there be, from God only it is derived; and, that there is a true account, has been demonstrated by men who made the subject the study of their lives.

From rejecting all evidence, external and internal, in proof of the Old Testament, we are next informed by Mr. Paine, what the commencement of it really is. "It has all the appearance of a tradition; which the Israelites had before they came (anglicè, "*went*") into Ægypt; and at their departure, they put it at the head of their history. It is most probable they did not know how they came by it. The manner in which the account opens, shews it to be a tradition. "It begins abruptly; it is nobody that speaks; it is nobody that hears; it is addressed to nobody; it has no voucher *." There is something conceded in this description. The tradition was not then borrowed from the Ægyptians, for "the Israelites had it before they went into Ægypt." If they prefixed it to the head of their history, on their leaving Ægypt, it is not probable that they should be ignorant how they came

came by it; for the care they took to preserve, shewed that they valued the tradition; and this value set on it, would naturally lead to an endeavour to find out the author and origin. But what are the characteristic marks of tradition, observable in the account? The philosophical history is, that of the creation of matter, by a God; and the successive formation of the universe by mechanical agents. The fact is asserted with the utmost simplicity. It is not a discourse, but a narrative. Mr. Paine, however, dislikes the beginning. It is abrupt. Another unfortunate circumstance, "It is addressed to no-body." According to this fastidious critic, the account of the creation should have been conveyed in an epistle dedicatory from God to mankind. It certainly is not couched in such a style. Yet there are passages which have extorted the eulogium of at least, as good a judge of language as Mr. Paine. Even in a Greek translation, Longinus could feel the wonderful sublimity of that sentence, "Let there be light; and light there was *."

We now come to the detestable parts of the bible, according to Mr. Paine. "It is an history of wicked ess, which has served to brutalize mankind. And, for my own part, says he, I sincerely

• Longinus "De Sublimitate."

“sincerely detest it *.” This is only saying, that if there be any excellence in the Hebrew writings, it would be thrown away on Mr. Paine, as pearls are when cast before swine. Among the Jews, there have, in all ages been men of exemplary piety. Their belief has influenced their conduct. The Jewish scriptures, therefore, have not a tendency to corrupt and brutalize mankind. The two hinges on which Judaism turns, are, the love of God and the love of man. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God [Jehovah Aleim] with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy fellow-creature as thyself.” Is this an injunction calculated to corrupt and brutalize mankind? Does it not, on the contrary, breathe that very spirit which Mr. Paine has recommended in many parts of his other writings, the spirit of philanthropy? Love of God must exalt, and love of man expand the soul; both combined, sublime our nature into something above mortality. What have those parts in the bible, to which Mr. Paine alludes, to do, for example, with the preceding precepts? Here is the law; here are the prophets. The history of mankind in all ages, must necessarily contain an history of crimes. If there be wars, there will be cruelties; if conquest, slaughter; if persecution, victims. What is there extraordinary

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* Page 10, “Age of Reason.”

in all this? The historical, and, as Mr. Paine calls them, anecdotal parts of the bible, are what they pretend to be, and no more. The accounts given of men, are accounts fairly given of them as men, with all their imperfections on their heads. Had they been otherwise represented, the truth of the representation would have been questioned; and, human nature being the same under every dispensation, we should have said, that the picture was a partial one, which exhibited men of former ages more perfect than those of the present. By the tablature of the bible, it appears, that Jewish kings, ministers, judges, officers, secretaries, and all the inferior regalia tribe, were three thousand years ago exactly the same description of characters, that they were among us Europeans in the last century: some good, some bad, the generality indifferent, all imperfect, and the best ordinarily the worst accommodated, as to the goods of fortune. But, to what does all this amount? To quote the vices or imperfections of individuals, as arguments against a system, is reasoning from particulars to generals, in a manner inadmissible. Such, however, are the proofs Mr. Paine offers. He is unfortunate in his selection, as many of them may be turned against him with a ten-fold force. He understands mechanics; the lever and the wedge are against him.

Thus

Thus treating the Jewish scriptures as tending to brutalization and corruption, Mr. Paine compliments the Psalms, and the book of Job, as containing a great deal of "elevated sentiment, reverentially expressed, of the power and benignity of the Almighty *." Now for the drawback. "But they stand in no higher rank than many other compositions on similar subjects, as well *before that time* as since." Before what time? The Book of Job has, by many most learned Jews and Christians, been ascribed to Moses †, as the author. The Psalms were written, some by David, and the rest by other persons. They not only reverentially express the benign power of the Deity; but they relate the "wonders that he has performed for the children of men ‡." They recognize the several transactions recorded in the Jewish writings, such as the creation and formation of the universe by Jehovah Aleim; the visible intercourse with God to Abraham; the promise made and renewed to him; the going into Ægypt, and the deliverance of the Israelites from thence in the manner related by Moses. The Psalms are not deistical compositions; they are component parts of Jewish revelation. The celestial sentiments and elevated sublimities, are the over-

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flowings

* Page 10, "Age of Reason."

† See a book entitled "Elihu." ‡ Psalm 97.

flowings of gratitude to Jehovah for the revelation given of himself; and for the numberless instances in which he had visibly, as well as providentially, interposed for the preservation of those who believed in him as the true and only God *. The people of the surrounding nations did not believe in this true and only God. They had lost the knowledge of him, and worshipped different objects under different names. The fire at the orb of the sun; the light issuing from that orb; the air; and the whole material heavens, formed the different gods of the several Gentile nations. What Mr. Paine will think extraordinary, they had their Trinity also †. It was paternal kindness, therefore, to prohibit any intercourse with those nations, to prevent the Jews from being corrupted from the truth.

The Proverbs are next brought forward. They pass for the works of Solomon; but “are most probably a collection. They are inferior to the proverbs of the Spaniards, and they are not more wise and æconomical than those of the American Franklin ‡.” It is of very little consequence to the object in dispute, whether the Spaniards, or the Americans, when speaking

* See, “Horne’s Translation of the Psalms.”

† See, “Names and Attributes of the Trinity of the Gentiles.”

‡ Page 11, “Age of Reason.”

ing of the Jewish proverbs, say, a greater than Solomon is here. To judge of the superiority, we must know to what collection of Spanish, or American proverbs, Mr. Paine refers. If it should be proved, that Solomon was inferior to Cervantes, it would not affect the truth of revelation.

The prophets now succeed in the order of examination. These " were *poets* and itinerant " preachers, who mixed *poetry*, *anecdote* and *devotion* together, and whose works still retain " the air and style of poetry, though in translation. There is not, throughout the whole " book called the Bible, any word that describes " to us what we call poetry. The case is, that " the word *prophet*, to which latter times have " affixed a new idea, was the Bible word for poet; " and the word prophesying, meant the *art of* " *making poetry*; it also meant the art of *playing* " *poetry to a tune upon any instrument of music* *." An Highlander playing a Scotch air on the bagpipes, is a prophet; an Irish harper is the same; the instrument of the latter, however, being the most agreeable, the harper is the better prophet. Mr. Paine furnishes his prophesying-poets with " instruments of music then in fashion;" and being itinerant preachers, as well as poets, they set out in a groupe on a travelling party throughout
Judea,

* Page 11, "Age of Reason."

Judea, like Thespis and his performers, in a cart, and instruct the people, by playing a tune on an instrument, or prophesying poetry. This is Mr. Paine's account of the Jewish prophets. They were vagrant tribes of poets and musicians. The art of *making*, not writing poetry, was also a part of their business, and they danced occasionally; as David did when he met the ark of the Lord, and went joyfully dancing before it.

It being thus settled what the prophets were, Mr. Paine proceeds to inform us, who among the Jews were of that description. "Deborah and Baruk were prophets; not because they predicted any thing, but because they composed a poem. David is ranked among the prophets, for he was a musician. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were not prophets; it does not appear that they could either sing, play music, or make poetry *." When Jacob, on his death-bed, took parental leave of his sons, there is something very like a prediction † of events that would

* Page 12, "Age of Reason."

† "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet; until SHILOH come; and to him shall the gathering of the people be." The last words of Jacob, respecting the posterity of Judah; who continued, with a portion of the tribe of Benjamin, a body-politic until the coming of Christ.

See, "Jennings's Jewish Antiquities;" or, Discourses on Godwin's "Moses and Aaron."

would happen the several tribes of which they were the heads ; but as the patriarch did not play a tune on an instrument, or deliver his sentiments in a song, he was no prophet. From the new light thus thrown on the subject, there are several passages in the Old and New Testament, which will have a wonderful effect if read differently from the manner in which they now stand. For example .—“ Touch not mine anointed, and do “ my *musicians* no harm.”—“ If ye believe not “ Moses and the *makers of poetry*, neither will ye “ believe though one should arise from the dead.” —“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! thou that *killest* “ the *players of tunes on an instrument* !” The substitution of these words and phrases for that of prophets, the reader must perceive, gives a singular pertinency to the sense. To be serious : Mr. Paine confounds, where there is clearly a distinction. The sublimest poetry is to be found in the Bible. The book of Job is in the poetic style. It is true that there were companies, or bands of minstrels, among the Jews, joining music instrumental and vocal ; and the latter might have been poetry. Such of the hymns or psalms as were written by David, he might, before publication, have accompanied on some instrument : but, all this is distinct from prophecy, as implying prediction ; and the word prophet in the original does not mean a poet, but a predictor, and sometimes a predictor so demonstrating himself by miracles.

Thus

Thus in the last chapter of Deuteronomy *.
 “ There arose not a prophet since in Israel like
 “ Moses—in all signs and wonders.” Thus literally rendered from the Hebrew by *Arias Montanus* in his interlineary version—“ Et non surrexit
 “ propheta ultra in Israel, sicut Moseh—in omni-
 “ bus Signis et Portentis.”

When Jeremiah † is commanded to tell the Jews what in future shall happen, that Nebuchadnezzar shall take their city, carry them captive into Babylon, and that after seventy years bondage there, they shall return to their own country; is this poetry or prediction? When Ezekiel ‡ denounces the ruin of Tyre; whose riches, fairs, merchandize, ships of war, and extensive commerce with the principal nations then existing, rendered so illustrious; when it is foretold that the destruction of this Tyre § shall be such as to strike surrounding nations with terror; will

* Chapter xxiv. verse 10, 11, Deuteronomy.

† Chapter xxv. verse 11, Jeremiah.

‡ Chapter xxviii. verse 7, Ezekiel.

§ There are several things extremely remarkable in the description of antient Tyre. It was a maritime and mercantile nation. It had an abundance of shipping, and the commerce was most extensive. The trade to Tarshish was in silver, iron, lead, brass vessels, with other nations, descendants of Japhet, horses and mules with the same. Ivory, and ebony imported from the posterity of Ham. With Syria, emeralds, purple, broidery, fine linen, coral, chrysopease or agate. With Judah

will Mr. Paine call this poetry? When by the same Ezekiel the desolation of Ægypt, by the Babylonians, is denounced; is this "playing a tune on an instrument?" And when the final overthrow of the king of Babylon himself, the instrument used in destroying Ægypt, is mentioned as a certain future event; is this singing a song? The English translation of the Bible is open to Mr. Paine. He there will find this prophecying, or, according to him, poetizing, the rise and downfall of nations, in almost every chapter of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. If he will take the trouble to look into any of the English writers, on † antient history, he will perceive the fate of kingdoms happening in exact conformity to their several denunciations: If this be poetry, it is of an awful species.

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dah, wheat, honey, oil, rosin. Exports to Damascus, wine, white wool; with Arabia, lambs, rams, goats, spices, precious stones, gold. Tyre abounded in mariners, in pilots, persons handling the oar. She enriched the rulers of the earth with "the multitude of her riches, and of her merchandize." Yet by "a terrible nation of foreigners," Tyre was buried in the heart of the sea; and so dreadful was her overthrow, as to astonish other nations, make them afraid, trouble the countenances of their rulers, fill their minds with terrors.

* Prideaux's Connection of Sacred and Profane History. Shuckford's connection.

Rollin's Ancient History, translated from the French.

Antient Universal History, by George Psalmanazer, Archibald Bower, and others.

I really am at a loss how to treat the author of the book under examination. He has come forward to the world as a naturally illumined man. He has been the founder of a reputation which will be transmitted to ages. When the present and future generations shall be swept by the hand of time among the mouldering ruins of antient worlds, the name of Mr. Paine will live in celebrity. This compliment is most willingly bestowed; it comes warm from the heart. But, when a man, without powers adequate to the purpose; without any of the diversity of antient literature necessary for the investigation; without oriental language, or oriental knowledge, attempts to write down an Eastern book of at the least three thousand five hundred years antiquity, and professedly of everlasting importance to our species; we then cannot forbear to censure such a man for the rash exposure of his ignorance. It is possible that Mr. Paine may be mistaken. As a friend to mankind, that possibility ought to have deterred him from the present publication; for there is turpitude in attempting to make proselytes in error. If he be not mistaken, he is an infidel on such shallow grounds, and with such flimsy arguments to support him in his opinion, that he may be fairly said to disbelieve through weak credulity.

To return to the subject. Finishing his remarks (for it would be absurd to call them arguments)

ments) on the Jewish scripture, which "did it
 " excel in purity of ideas and expression, all the
 " books that are now extant in the world, he
 " would not take it for his rule of faith, as being
 " the word of God * ;" he goes on, according
 to his term, to the book called "The New
 " Testament." The first thing he does in going
 on, is to stumble at the threshold, by finding fault
 with a title he does not understand. He then
 tells us, "that, had it been the object or inten-
 " tion of Jesus Christ to establish a new religion,
 " he would undoubtedly have written it himself,
 " or procured it to be written in his life time †."
 In the next page he says, "it does not appear
 " that Jesus Christ had any school education; and
 " the probability is, that he could not write ‡."
 This accounts for his not being his own biog-
 rapher. If Mr. Paine will not allow him able to
 write, he seems to admit that he could argue;
 for he is mentioned "at the age of twelve years
 " sitting among the Jewish doctors (in the Saned-
 " him) asking and answering them questions."
 This fact proves him to have been eminently
 gifted. As to his religion, "he called men to
 " the practice of moral duties, and the belief of
 " one

* Page 13, "Age of Reason."

† Page 13, *Ibid.*

‡ Page 14, *Ibid.*

"one God. The great trait in his character is, philanthropy*."

This description of Christianity is just as true as Swift's description of the inhabitants in Lilliput. Judaism and Christianity have a nearer affinity than Mr. Paine may imagine. The one was the shadow, the other the substance. Before letters were known, hieroglyphics were used; and that mode of conveying ideas was as well understood as writing afterwards. Sacrifice was the most early institution †, because what it signified was the chief matter of importance to be remembered by man. This was practised soon after the fall. A belief, therefore, of atonement by blood, prevailed long before the ceremonials of religion were adopted. This belief, traceable to the first man, could by him be derived only from the author of his existence. It was the revealed means of reconciliation, and the action was a symbol to keep the means in remembrance. From this origin, and the object figured, it is, that sacrificature passed as a religious rite among all

† Pages 4, 6, "Age of Reason."

† "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof, an offering." Genesis, chap. iv. ver. 4. Here a lamb was sacrificed, the fat disposed in a certain manner, probably consumed by fire. The ritual of sacrifice was observed before any positive institution. Adam only could have instructed his sons, and Cain rejected reconciliation by blood.

all nations; with this difference, that the Jews sacrificed symbolically, the Heathens literally, losing sight of the intention for which the act was performed. Beside sacrifice, there were other rites introduced soon after the fall, equally significative, and well understood by those who observed them. The great mistake made by cavillers at the Jewish scriptures, arises from their not considering the nature and genius of the language in which they are written. The Hebrew is all pureness and simplicity. There are scarcely more than a thousand primitives in the language. The names of animals, persons, and things, are not, as in other languages, arbitrary, but descriptive of the physical natures, qualities, and properties, of the objects named. The Hebrew is ideal and symbolical. Hence what to us is obscure, in the most remote age was conspicuous, and familiarly comprehensible. The assertion, for example, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent;" was, to our first parents, a promise pregnant with conciliatory information. It was the foundation of that universal expectancy of a Messiah, which afterwards prevailed. It was this made barrenness so much dreaded by the Hebrew women, and caused their extreme desire of a male child, hoping to be the mother of the promised Messiah. The Jewish unadulterated creed, consisted of two leading articles; atonement by blood, and

and the coming of the Messiah. The first descended traditionally through all the Heathen nations of antiquity; of the last, some obscured idea was shadowed out in their different mythologies. Pure Judaism was, therefore, Christianity in figure. The whole of the Jewish ritual went to this point. The difference in the faith of Abraham * and that of a Christian, consists only in the belief of a future and a past event. The coming of Christ the Messiah, as we believe him to be, is the completion of the piece; his death, the catastrophe which realized all that was prefigured in sacrifice. Mr. Paine, then, in his representation of Christianity, as merely "calling men to the practice of moral duties, and "the belief of one God," errs most egregiously, not knowing any thing of the system he is endeavouring to overturn. He supposes Christianity to have been an entire new religion; Jesus Christ to have been the founder of it; and then, that we ought to have had a regular biographical history of him, from the hour of his birth, to the day of his crucifixion. This is blunder. The simple question respecting Christ is, that which was propounded in his life-time; "is he the "Messiah who should come, or must we look for "another?" His followers, believing him to be the

* "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it, and was "glad." Gospel, John.

the Messiah, had only to trace his lineal descent from Abraham and David; to give the general outline of his actions, from the time of his assumption of the public character, to that of his death; and, to close the tablature, as they have done, with his resurrection. Although Mr. Paine will not allow the existence of prophecy, the Jews believed it. They believed most firmly in the several predictions of their books, respecting a Messiah to come. The appeal, therefore, simply was, to those predictions being actually, or not, fulfilled in Christ. An history of his life, after the fancy of Mr. Paine, would have been a composition of impertinencies. How he employed his time before he entered on his public office, is inconsequential. The condition of his parents, as to poverty or riches, is the same. These matters, on which Mr. Paine lays so much stress, are puerilities. The grand and only point is, his being, or not being, the Messiah prefigured in the whole of the Jewish ritual; foretold in a multitude of passages in the Hebrew writings; acknowledged as such by numbers in his life-time, and now so received by those calling themselves after his name. This is the thing in issue. All other considerations are wide of the mark. Mr. Paine, by dwelling on foreign subjects, only trifles with his readers; bewildered himself, he bewilders others; and he affords a most striking example, that an uneducated mind, like uncultivated

vated soil, however rich by nature, will be more productive of weeds than flowers. As to his wit at the expence of the Christian story, it is really no more than an amalgamation of heterogenous ribaldry. — “Jesus Christ might as well have died of a fever, or of the small pox, old age, or any thing else” — a fever would have done as well as a cross * — “It represents the creator as coming off by a pun or a quibble.” Then comes a winding up of the whole. “The probability is, that the whole theory or doctrine of what is called the redemption, was originally fabricated on purpose to bring forward and build all those secondary and pecuniary redemptions upon. Such as, the releasing souls out of purgatory by prayers bought of the church with money. The selling of pardons, dispensations, indulgencies *.” Admirable reasoning! and extremely convincing! it is only making the effect precede the cause; skipping over a few hundred years, and introducing the Roman pontiffs as the coteremporaries of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Totally discarding one word of God, Mr. Paine sets up another, which is, the creation we behold. This creation, he says, “Preaches to all nations, and

* Page 14, “Age of Reason.”

“ and to all worlds. And this word of God reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God *.” If this be true, how happens it that there are at this day, millions of our species, as ignorant of the nature, existence, and attributes of God, as the brutes which range the fields and woods? The creation we behold is as visible to the inhabitants of China, Lapland, or Japan, as to Europeans. It was visible to the Phenicians, Chaldeans, Ægyptians, Greeks, and Romans, as to the Jews. Yet, this unerring word of God, which preaches to all nations, and reveals to man, all that is necessary for him to know of God, left nine-tenths of the inhabitants of the earth, in ancient times, utterly ignorant of his existence. The same preaching revelation, leaves the greatest part of the inhabitants of the globe, at this day, in equal ignorance of the true God. Look into the religious ceremonies of all nations †, and see how well instructed mankind have been, by the creation they beheld, in sound theism. Behold a Gentoo paying adoration to a cow ‡, and then tell us how it comes to pass, that the word of God in the creation does not teach him better? Here is the truth, and disingenuous

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* Pages 16, 17, “ Age of Reason.”

† See, Montfaucon’s “ Religious Ceremonies of all Nations.”

‡ Mr. Holwell’s “ India Tracts,” gives the best account of the origin of this adoration paid the cow.

nuous it is ; men light their reason at the torch of revelation, and then disown the source from whence they are illuminated. As the powers of man are limited to the objects of the senses, beholding a fine display of things, and all carried on mechanically in a rotationary circle, what is there to induce him to look farther? When told of a God, who gave existence to matter, form to an universe, and habitation to immensity ; man can then ascend on contemplation's wing, and from the wonders he beholds in the creation, infer the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator. Reason, so pompously extolled as the chief excellence of the human mind, cannot discover first principles ; they must be revealed ; and then they furnish ground-work for the reasoning faculty to compare, apply, deduce consequences. This is the order of our nature. To reverse it, is to grope our way in the dark ; or to follow an ignis fatuus that leads us bewildered through the mazes of conjecture, into the cavern of ignorance. When, therefore, Mr. Paine says, that it is only " by the exercise of reason man can discover God," he mistakes, because the discovery came originally from revelation, and the notices of it to be found among the Heathen nations of antiquity, and those of the present times, are traditions, more or less corrupted, of the fact so originally revealed. As to errors into which modern Judaism, or modern Christianity may have immersed ; as

to any christian system which may have been set up, "contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears; a religion of pomp and revenue, in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty *;" with such a system I have not any thing to do; it cannot be christianity, it is practical imposture. But, we are not from the abuse of an institution, to argue against the use of it. Judaism was not the less true, because the Scribes and Pharisees were a parcel of hypocrites.

The book of Job, and the nineteenth psalm; seem to attract the notice of Mr. Paine, as pieces of some celebrity. This proves his taste less vitiated than his principles. He styles these productions "theological orations, conformable to the original system of theology." They prove, he says, that "the study, and contemplation of the works of creation, and of the power and wisdom of God revealed and manifested in those works, made a great part of the religious devotion of the times in which they were written; and it was this devotional study and contemplation, that led to the discovery of the principles upon which, what are now called sciences, are established; and it is to the discovery of these principles, that almost all the

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arts

* Page 16, "Age of Reason."

" arts that contribute to the convenience of human life, owe their existence *."

But, why does Mr. Paine confine " theological orations conformable to the original system of theology," to a single psalm and book? Are there not other psalms, and other books of the Bible, which may be equally styled, " theological orations?"——" When I consider the heavens, the works of thine hands, the moon and the stars which thou hast made, Jehovah; what is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou regardest him?"——" O Jehovah! how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches!"——" Thou makest darkness and it is night, wherein all the beasts do trample on the forests."——" Thou, Jehovah, at the beginning didst lay the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest." There is no occasion to multiply quotations. Three parts out of four of the Hebrew scriptures contain philosophical references to the works of God, in the creation; and, therefore, contain an original system of theology. Still more. Either these references, being philosophically true, were dictated by God, or they were known by the persons making them, without such dictation. In the

the first case there was revelation, in the last knowledge of nature; which shews, that what is termed natural philosophy, is more antient than modern sophists imagine. The same as to the principles of science. Our universe is a machine. The agents carrying on the several operations of nature, are mechanical. The cold air rushing from the extremity of the circumference, to the centre; there melted by the fire at the orb of the sun, and issued forth in the condition of light, cause those opposite forces which are termed centripetal and centrifugal. The whole of the mundane system, cause and effect, is revealed. Nor are sciences or arts, of modern invention; they are only revivals of that knowledge which has been lost and obliterated, by the ravages of time. The Jews knew philosophy; the laws of mechanism; of matter and motion; the heavens astronomically; they were naturalists, for the names they gave animals described their natures. They were chymists. They understood geometry and mensuration; and, as to building, the temple of Solomon seems to have combined all the perfections of architecture. What led to this knowledge, is immaterial; it was known to the Jews; to the Phoenicians, Chaldeans, and Ægyptians: in comparison to which nations we are meer babes in real science. These are observations foreign to the purpose; and the only apology I can offer for them is, the excentric example of Mr. Paine.

There

There is a general error which runs through every page of the "Age of Reason," in which the Christian system is mentioned. The author indiscriminately confounds the system with the church; and he thus ascribes to the former, whatever may have been exceptionable in the latter: Mr. Paine says, "It is a fraud of the Christian system to call the sciences human inventions." The Christian system has little to do with the sciences. It is neither aided nor depreciated by them. It is not a physical, or astronomical discovery; but matter of fact, depending on testimony, record, history, memorials, and various corroborating circumstances, amounting, on the whole, to evidence striking conviction on the mind. Mr. Paine gives a perspicuous account of the principles of the sciences; of mechanics, as the application of those principles; of trigonometry, or the properties of a triangle producing, as employed on different objects, astronomy, navigation, geometry, architecture, mensuration. All this is very true. The Christian system contradicts it not. Still, however, this system has made "a revolution in theology, and in the state of learning." In theology it did most certainly cause a revolution, for it tore up Paganism by the roots. The only question is, as to the theology it introduced; if that be of God, the revolution was a blessing to mankind. "Learning does not consist in the knowledge of languages, but

" but in the knowledge of things, to which languages give names *." This, also, is a truism. The Christian system says the same. It calls us from the beggarly elements, from the husks of learning, to " the study of the works of God, " and of the power and wisdom of God, in his " works †." The persecution of Galileo for the discovery and use of telescopes ; and the condemnation of Vigilius, for asserting the Antipodes, make nothing against the Christian system : the bigotry and ignorance of the professors of that system, are only affected by it.

We now come to something like a closing point. Mr. Paine having depreciated the study of the dead languages, and deplored the mental darkness with which the Christian system had, for ages, overspread the world, proceeds " to " compare, or rather to confront, the evidence " that the structure of the universe affords, with " the Christian system of religion ‡." Thus raising the expectation of the reader, and preparing the human face-divine, to lift an head erect and view the stars §, Mr. Paine thus begins the contemplation ; — " My Father, being of the " quaker profession, it was my good fortune to " have

* Page 20, " Age of Reason."

† Page 21, *Ibid.*

‡ Page 29, *Ibid.*

§ ——— Os Homini sublime dedit ; cœlumque tueri jussit ;
et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus. OVID.

“ have an exceeding good moral education, and
 “ a tolerable stock of useful learning. Though
 “ I went to the grammar school, I did not learn
 “ latin. The natural bent of my mind was to
 “ science. I had some turn, and I believe some
 “ talent, for poetry *.” He then mentions his
 studies ; his writings ; his views in America ; and
 at last comes to the anecdotal part of his unbel-
 lief. “ When I was about seven or eight years
 “ of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation
 “ on *Redemption by the death of the son of God*, I
 “ went into the garden, and as I was going
 “ down the garden steps (for I perfectly recol-
 “ lect the spot) I revolted at the relation of what
 “ I had heard, and thought to myself that it was
 “ making God Almighty act like a passionate
 “ man, who killed his son when he could not
 “ revenge himself any other way. This was
 “ not one of those kind of thoughts that had
 “ any thing in it of childish levity,” (certainly
 not ; for he was about seven or eight years old)
 “ It was to me a serious reflection. I believe in
 “ the same manner to this moment. And I
 “ moreover believe, *that* any system of religion,
 “ *that* has any thing in it, *that* shocks the mind
 “ of a child, cannot be a true system †.” Here
 is another singular instance, that the greatest infi-
 dels

• Page 29, “ Age of Reason.”

† Page 31, *Ibid.*

dels are the strongest believers. Vaninus*, who was burnt at Tholouse for Atheism, believed that there was something of an evil principle in darkness. Mr. Paine will laugh at this: Vaninus would have laughed at him for making the idea of an eight years old infant, the criterion of truth: this is enormous faith! Stretched a little farther it will remove mountains.

To answer Mr. Paine, he must be followed through all his meanderings; through bog, brake, and quagmire, until he be overtaken on some plain, where the ground may fairly be disputed. He proposed to "confront the evidence that the structure of the universe affords, with the Christian system of religion†." This, gentle reader, he will do; but you must allow him to do it in his own way. The structure of the universe is a dry subject; you must, therefore, let him exhilarate his spirits by a few idle remarks. "It seems as if parents of the Christian profession were ashamed to tell their children any thing
G " about

* Vaninus was a most learned man, an Italian by birth. He went to France on purpose to propagate his Atheistical principles. This was at the beginning of the last century. He wrote two pieces, the title of one was "*Æternæ Providentiæ Amphitheatrum*." The subject of the other was, the wonders of nature. It was in Latin, but I forget the title. In both he maintains Atheism.

† Page 29, "Age of Reason."

“ about the principles of their religion *.” Proved by the Bible being the earliest book they read in schools. “ The true Deist has but one Deity.” Be it so. “ Jesus Christ called men to the belief “ of one God †.” Here Mr. Paine has placed the Christian on as good a footing as the Deist. “ The religion of the *Quakers* approaches the “ nearest to true Deism ‡.” Voltaire concisely calls them English Protestant-Jesuits; and Burnet, in the memoirs of his own times, gives this character of William Penn, the modern founder of the sect; “ he had a luscious way of talking, and “ there were some who viewed him in the light of “ a suspected Papist §.”

Quitting these *reflections*, says Mr. Paine, “ I “ proceed to other matters. After I had made “ myself master of the Use of the Globes, and of “ the Orrery, and conceived an idea of the infi- “ nity of space, and of the eternal divisibility of “ matter, I began to compare, or as I have before “ said, to confront the internal evidence those “ things afford, with the Christian system of “ faith ||.” His comparing and confronting argument against the Christian system, is substanti- ally

* Page 31, “ Age of Reason.”

† Page 14, *Ibid.*

‡ Page 31, *Ibid.*

§ Burnet's “ Memoirs of his own Times,” Vol. 4.

|| Page 32, “ Age of Reason.”

ally this; that there is an immensity of space; and since it seems incompatible, from the fulness of our world, that there should be any un-occupied void in creation, space is filled to infinity with suspended worlds: The Christian system of faith, not admitting infinity of worlds, is, therefore, contradicted by the internal evidence of the creation. This is putting the argument of Mr. Paine in the strongest light; and it saves the reader the trouble of accompanying him in an ascent, which might bewilder the imagination, and occasion a giddiness of the head. Mr. Paine conceives an idea of the infinity of space. What his idea may be, I know not. The term reduced to the language of common sense means, boundless vacuity, infinite emptiness, or place in which habitable globes may be suspended in a series without end. If this be Mr. Paine's "structure of the universe," I would advise him to have recourse to some mechanical props to support it from falling, and, in the crush of creation, laying infinity in ruins. Space, if it be any thing, is matter; and infinite matter is a solecism. An infinite material universe is a term as ridiculously inconsistent. It is wonderful what an affectation there is in great philosophers to believe absurdities, for the sake of appearing sublimely singular! Sir Isaac Newton went a different way to work. He talked of infinite space, but he did not appropriate it to hold an infinity of worlds; he made another use of it. According to him, it might serve as a sensorium

of the deity; the organ of divine intelligence*. Now, if this great mathematician was right, Mr. Paine must be wrong; for infinite space does not contain infinity of worlds; it is pre-occupied as the medium of God's intelligence: perhaps Mr. Paine may dispute the point with Sir Isaac, in favour of worlds without end, and say, that such an everlasting series may be placed in the divine sensorium without at all incommoding the deity.

The "eternal divisibility of matter," is another of Mr. Paine's conceptions. He is pregnant with conceits. What is the eternal divisibility of matter? The minutest atoms are either angular, globular, or spherical. Probably the latter. Let them be the smallest imagination can form an idea of, still we are to believe that they may be actually divided, subdivided, and sub-subdivided
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* Having furnished the deity with a sensorium, Sir Isaac makes the divine nature infinitely extended, and in *substance* every where present. His words are, "Deus omnipræsens est, non per virtutem solam, sed etiam per *substantiam*; nam virtus sine substantia, subsistere non potest." *Newt. Prin.* Here this great man observes not the distinction between power essential, and power mechanical. Matter acts only by contact, and, therefore, to act at all, must substantially be present. It is otherwise with the divine nature, which is not material. One of the essential attributes of it is, infinite power acting by volition. The will is the power of Jehovah. That will was the infinite act which gave existence to matter. There is no occasion for the divine substance to accompany the divine energy. The volition of God is every thing.

ad infinitum. Separate them to eternity, there still will be something left, and that something is again eternally separable. Can a greater absurdity enter the head of man? Yet this is palmed on the world as profound philosophy; exalted science; that is to flash conviction on the mind of the enlightened, and throw the vulgar into a panic of surprize. I close, then, with Mr. Paine on this topic. His structure of the universe does not conform to that of the Jewish and Christian system. The difference, however, affords no internal evidence against either of those systems, because the universe is not so constituted as he describes it to be. Let him prove, instead of imagine, the existence of infinite space, and of an infinity of inhabited worlds*, and we will take

* Pope, who was to Bolingbroke what Lucretius was to Epicurus, the dresser up of his philosophy in a poetic garb, has given us this theory in fine harmonious verse.

He who through vast immensity can pierce,
See *worlds on worlds* compose one universe;
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns,
What varied beings *people* every star.

Who of our species has pierced through this vast immensity, and beheld these worlds on worlds? In almost every age the theory of a plurality of inhabited worlds, has been asserted by some, denied by others; which proves the theory to be at least a doubtful matter. It has not yet been ascertained to any certainty whether the moon, the nearest to our earth,

take his word for the rest. Until that be done, I leave him to wander through the boundless regions of his space in search of the smallest particle of matter he can meet with, that his ingenuity may be employed in eternally dividing it.

Mystery, miracle, and prophecy, are next introduced as the "three principal means that have been employed to impose upon mankind*." Mr. Paine is a detester of mystery; and why so? Because "truth never envelopes itself in mystery." This is his position. Let us try it by the rule of his own faith. He believes the existence of a God. Is every thing clear and comprehensible on this point? An essence eternally existing in and of itself, with infinite powers and perfections; distinct from matter, and the extra-cause of all other existencies! is not this of all other mysteries the greatest? Is it not the miracle of miracles, the wonder of wonders? Will Mr. Paine after this assert, that "truth never envelopes herself in mystery?" It is her constant habiliment. The author of all truth is himself so enveloped. In vain we strive by soaring meditation to acquire the glimmering of

earth, is inhabited, or habitable. Bishop Wilkins proposed a method of flying to the moon. If that were practicable, Mr. Paine might take a journey thither, and bring us a packet of news from the inhabitants.

* Pages 37, 38, "Age of Reason."

of an idea of his nature and perfections. As he is invisible to our sight, so he absconds from our contemplation. What is the creation of matter? Causing a substance of specific properties to exist. Then there was a point at which there was no such thing as material substance. If that be so, out of what no—thing was this something produced? Here again is mystery. Here is miracle. Here is truth enveloped in mystery; her customary garb. As to prophecy, I have already referred to passages in the antient scripture on that subject. I will only, therefore, summarily observe, that the original language of revelation, communicates ideas of future events; rites, ceremonies, signs, and emblems, were instituted to keep those events in remembrance; and shadow out, if so it may be phrased, what would happen in future ages. The whole of the Jewish ritual was prophecy and figure. My situation precludes me from the use of authorities which might be adduced in proof of this assertion.

Mr. Paine finishes his work with a recapitulation of his positions; and he remarks that Adam, if ever there were such a man, was created a deist. This is true only in a certain sense of the word. But admitting it so to be, if Adam were created a deist, he lived and died something else; for he believed in the promise of a Messias, and there is
reason

reason to suppose that he sacrificed * ; a faith and practice inconsistent with what is called deism.

We are now come to a point from which a summary review of the whole may be taken. This work of Mr. Paine is not of a species to bear systematic refutation ; for although it has reason for a title, there is very little legitimate reasoning in it. The book is a miscellany of dogmas, observations, sarcasm, and ridicule. The writer has evidently presumed on the authority of his public fame, which he conceived would sanction whatever he might think proper to advance. Hence he pays no attention to order, and not a great deal to truth. " Mahomet and Christ " were of obscure parentage †. Mahomet was an Arab, of the tribe of the Korashites ; which was accounted the noblest of all their tribes, and he was lineally descended from the founder. His grandfather, Abdal Motallab, was the head and governor of this tribe, residing at Mecca, the seat of the government. He had thirteen sons, the eldest of whom, Abdallah, was the father of Mahomet. He was, therefore, of the most illustrious family in Arabia. Mistating the descent of

* To the best of my recollection, Doctor Kennicott mentions the covering of skins (Gen. iii. verse 21.) to be the skins of animals slain in sacrifice. Which is most probable, as animal food was not in usage.

† Page 14, " Age of Reason."

of Mahomet, Mr. Paine as egregiously falsifies his condition. He calls him a mule driver. Camels and mules are to him the same species of animals. The city of Mecca was badly situated as to soil, but most conveniently placed for merchandize. The principal inhabitants were merchants. The commodities which they imported from India, Ethiopia, and the Southern parts, they sent into Syria, Persia, and Egypt, on camels. Mahomet, being engaged with his uncle in this kind of merchandize, accompanied the cargoes, and superintended the sale. This is Mr. Paine's "mule driver of obscure parentage." With respect to Christ, he was of the tribe of Judah, of the house of David, and lineally descended from Abraham; a pedigree of only forty-two generations.

As Mr. Paine has had numerous predecessors in the same line, it is not difficult to trace his footsteps in the path which they have trodden. Toland amused his readers at the expence of Moses, and Mr. Paine sees nothing more in the commandments than what any man "qualified to be a law-giver could produce himself, without having recourse to supernatural invention. "They contain some good *moral precepts* *." What does Mr. Paine think of the cessation from

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labour

* Page 3, "Age of Reason."

labour every seventh day, and the reason assigned for such cessation? Is this a good moral precept? There have been founders of empires and legislators in abundance: Who among them ever asserted that in six days God created the heavens and the earth? There is nothing in the decalogue but what any ordinary man might suggest; and yet here is an extraordinary idea which never entered the mind of any other law-giver beside Moses: This is not the first bold assertion of Mr. Paine, positively contradicted by matter of fact.

“ It is an inconsistency scarcely possible to be credited, *that* any thing should exist under the name of a religion, *that* held it to be *irreligious* to study and contemplate the structure of the universe *that* God had made. But, the fact is too well established to be denied *.” Here Mr. Paine alludes either to Judaism, or to Christianity; for those are the two religions against which he directs the whole of his argumentative force. Is the fact true with respect to Judaism? So far from it, that the references in the old scriptures to the works of creation, and the reiterated calls on man to consider the wonderful nature of those works, are so exceedingly obvious, that it must be wilful to overlook them. It is the
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* Page 29, “ Age of Reason.”

the theme perpetual of the authors of the Psalms *. The book of Job is an almost continued citation of the miraculous operations of the Almighty, from which his infinite wisdom, and other adorable perfections, are inferred. A man has only to open the Bible indiscriminately to be convinced, that the Jewish religion did not hold it *irreligious* to study and contemplate the structure of the universe. Is the fact which Mr. Paine has asserted, more true as to Christianity? The apostle Paul is for once in his sober senses, for he happens precisely to agree with Mr. Paine; "The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, are understood by the things that are made." Is this to hold the study of creation as *irreligious*? What saith Christ? "He maketh his sun to rise on the just

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" and

* "The works of Jehovah are great, sought out by all those who have pleasure therein." Psalm cxi.

"I will praise thee, for I am astonishingly made; marvelous are thy works, and that my soul well knoweth." Psalm cxxxix.

"O Jehovah! how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." Psalm civ.

"O give thanks unto Jehovah! sing unto him; talk of all his wondrous works!" Psalm cv.

"The heavens are thine, the earth also thine; the world and the fulness thereof; thou hast founded them." Psalm lxxxix.

“ and on the unjust.” The diffusive beneficence of God is here portrayed by the all-cheering orb of day, arising to infuse his vivifying influence into the several parts of creation. Still, however, Mr. Paine maintains it as a fact “ that “ a *religion* existed which held it *irreligious* to “ study and contemplate the universe.” The question is short; What religion was it? Not the Jewish, as I have shewn. Not the Christian; as I defy Mr. Paine to shew. But it seems that there was “ a long chain of despotic ignorance, and “ the event that served to break the first link in “ this long chain, was the reformation by Luther*.” Martin Luther lived in the age of the emperor Charles the fifth. He quarrelled with the pope of that day, or the pope quarrelled with him, and, either from zeal, spleen, disappointment, or a mixture of each, he commenced reformer. Before his attempting a reformation, a sort of eclipse of reason prevailed, and all was mental darkness. The clergy were grossly ignorant; the laity the same; and natural philosophy, or the knowledge of the works of God in creation, were not objects of study. Here, then, is Mr. Paine’s “ fact too well established to be “ denied, that a *religion* existed which held it to “ be *irreligious* to study and contemplate the universe that God had made.” So that ignorance and

* Page 29, “ Age of Reason.”

and superstition prevailing in, or before the time of Luther, is a proof that the Christian *religion* held the contemplation of the universe to be profaneness. Well reasoned, Mr. Paine! close; and very argumentative!

There is another positive assertion of this writer which will not bear him out in the inference he insinuates. "Christianity was accommodated to the purpose of power and revenue." By whom? Not by the first promulgators; for they disclaimed both revenue and power, suffering every degree of poverty and hardship. Not by their immediate successors; for they were similar characters. Mr. Gibbon, and others, have endeavoured to prove, that the number of martyrs to the Christian cause was not so great as supposed. Martyrs, however, there were in abundance, of different ages, and both sexes †. I mean to ground no other argument on martyrdom than this; that those who lay down their lives for a principle which disclaims power and revenue, cannot be accused of accommodating it to such purposes. If this accommodation took place in subsequent ages, it is an argument against the accommodators, not the religion. What men may have done, is one thing; how far they were justified by the Christian religion in doing it, is another.

Next

† Cave's "Primitive Christianity."

Next to the principle, certain doctrines of Christianity fall under the lash of Mr. Paine's sarcastic stroke. The "Christian arithmetic," "making three one, and one three †," is abhorrent to him. The Pagan calculation was still on a larger scale; for there were families of gods. What will satisfy this gentleman? Unity alone. A monad. It is strange that philosophers will not philosophize! Like the meer vulgar, they transfer material ideas to the Deity, number him, as it were, by the rule of corporeal equation, and then determine the impossibility of three *bodies* being *one*. Do we know any thing of spirit? In what the essence of it consists? Whether in the sameness of that essence there may not subsist plurality of distinction? We are told, on at least as good authority as Mr. Paine can produce, that "GOD is a SPIRIT. †" How are we to frame any notion of spirit? Any idea we have of body will not help us; for, all body is a composition of parts, and whatever is compounded is subject to dissolution; spirit, consequently, must be something very different; what that something is, who can tell? It is not perceivable by us, because our organs are fitted only for bodily perceptions; yet that which is every way incomprehensible, we presumptuously

† Page 4, "Age of Reason."

† "GOD is a SPIRIT, and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." JESUS CHRIST.

presumptuously reduce to the standard of human examination, and pronounce according to the weak or biased dictation of our judgment. This is to dogmatize, not argue. Mr. Paine is fond of familiar objects, as illustrating sometimes the sublimest truths. A lighted candle seems to incorporate three conditions in one and the same fluid substance. There is air, fire, and light; the air is the pabulum, or feeder of the fire; the fire generates the light. The conditions are co-existent, they are distinct in quality, yet inseparable as to substance. Mr. Paine may smile at this; and he is at liberty to put my candle under a bushel, provided he, by his superior blaze, should not obscure what he proposes to illumine.

A "Man-god, and the death of God," share a fate similar to the Christian arithmetic; they are subjects for ridicule, and Mr. Paine laughs at them. In this merry mood it is that he jocosely proposes an ænigmatical question to Christian doctors; "Why the Devil did not shew Christ *America*, as well as the other kingdoms of the "world†?" I will tell Mr. Paine the reason. His "footy highness," as he calls him, did not chuse to deprive Christopher Columbus of the credit of the discovery.

To

† Page 41, "Age of Reason."

To be serious. Men view the same object in a very different light ; as the spots on the disk of the sun may be blemishes to some observers, while to others they set off, to more advantage, the luminous parts of that glorious orb. It is thus with mental vision. One man beholds that as gross error, which another cherishes as precious truth. Mr. Paine is a sworn foe to revelation. He considers it imposture. He would, therefore, bury the religion it upholds among the wreck of demolished worlds, exult in the destruction, and compose a sonnet on the catastrophe. He has shewn an hearty good-will to accomplish this. He has at least the merit of being sincere in his endeavours, and, therefore, it is, that he so labours the point. But what, after all, has Mr. Paine produced ? Scarcely any thing of novelty. He has only said, what others, with more point, raillery, and acuteness, have said before him. Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, Voltaire, Toland, Tindal, Collins, Morgan, Mandeville, Chubb, have, in their several ways, anticipated every thing to be found in the " Age of Reason." Bolingbroke beats our author out of the field ; and Shaftsbury has treated the story of Jonah and the whale, in an high-finished style of comic humour. In the hands of Mr. Paine it does not even excite a smile. But here is the fact. However old the tenets may be, yet ushered into the world under the popular advantage of a name, they acquire a
new

new air, and it becomes a kind of fashion to admire, without examining, on account of the celebrity of the author. That there is a God, or *first cause*, as he is otherwise termed, may be creed sufficient for him who esteems it the sublime of science to understand the properties of a triangle, and of a steel-yard forming a triangle when in action *. The bosom must be frigid that finds ultimate consolation in such matters. A *first cause*, considered merely as the creator of the universe, does not implicate in the idea a being interested for the welfare of man, in contradistinction to other animals. Mr. Paine is so candid as not even to pretend this to be the case. He allows the difficulty of having at all recourse to a God; but, he softens the matter by telling us, that the difficulty would be infinitely greater should we not admit such a being. Hence, because the whole of creation is incomprehensible, some fancied energetic power, a kind of plastic nature, is called in to cut the difficulty which cannot otherwise be solved, and thus save us the trouble of further imagination on the subject.

Is this God, so introduced, concerned for the happiness of our species? As much as for that of a spider; both crawl into existence by the power of a *first cause*. Is there any paternal tenderness manifested by this *first cause*? Certainly.

I

The

* Page 16, "Age of Reason."

The wolf, hyæna, tyger, monkey, and man, are equally his offspring, for he is the father of man, says Mr. Paine, in the same sense that he is the father of all other animals. Are there no exclusive privileges enjoyed by our species? Yes. We can know something of the properties of lines, circles, superficies, and solids. In particular we can explore the wonders of a triangle; while the bee is as profitably occupied in producing an hexagonal. We can, also, like the Laputans, become star-gazers, gueßers about innumerable worlds; and have the consolation to leave matters respecting our own existence, in darkness, doubt, and uncertainty. What of futurity? A blank. A probable—perhaps that we may exist hereafter, but about the manner of which, we are not to trouble our heads*. What a chilling system is this! what a damp it casts on the heart! such a system dries up every source of consolatory reflection; even hope expires; and man is abandoned to despondency by the author of his being. In pity to our species let us at least express a wish that such a system may not be true.

Mr. Paine is skilled in mathematics. He avails himself of that knowledge; and he considers it, when applied to the structure of the universe, as
affording

* “ I trouble not myself about the manner of future existence—it appears more *probable* to me that I shall continue to exist.” Page 43, “ Age of Reason.”

affording demonstrative evidence against the religion of our scriptures. To meet the full force of his argument, the whole of it should be quoted. These are his observations.

“ The six planets revolving round the sun, are
 “ *Worlds*. The *space* in the *air*, or in the im-
 “ mensity of *space* that our solar system takes up
 “ for the *several worlds* to perform their revolu-
 “ tions in round the sun, is fifteen hundred and
 “ twenty-six miles, and in circular extent is near-
 “ ly five thousand miles. But this, immense as
 “ it is, is only one system of *worlds*. At a vast
 “ distance, beyond all power of calculation, are
 “ the fixed stars. The *probability* is, that each
 “ of these fixed stars, is also a sun, round which
 “ another system of *worlds*, or planets, perform
 “ revolutions. By this easy progression of ideas,
 “ the immensity of *space* will *appear* to be filled
 “ with systems of worlds.” Here is the theory.
 Now for the use of these worlds.

“ I return to explain the *great benefits arising to*
 “ *man* in consequence of the creator having made a
 “ *plurality* of *worlds*. Had the quantity of matter
 “ which these six *worlds* contain been blended into
 “ one solitary *globe*, either no revolutionary mo-
 “ tion would have existed, or not a sufficiency of
 “ it to give us the ideas, and the knowledge of
 “ science we now have ; and it is from the sci-

“ ences that all the mechanical arts that contri-
 “ bute so much to our earthly comfort and feli-
 “ city, are derived. From these benefits arising
 “ from the structure of the universe, formed as it
 “ is, We can discover *one* reason why a *plurality*
 “ of worlds has been made.”

A second reason.

“ The solitary idea of a solitary world rolling,
 “ or at rest, in the immense ocean of space, gives
 “ place to the chearful idea of a *society of worlds*.”

“ From whence, then, could arise the solitary,
 “ and strange conceit, that the Almighty, who
 “ had *millions of worlds*, equally dependent on
 “ his protection, should *quit the care of all the rest*,
 “ and come to die in our world *.”

On this astro-mathematic display, I offer the
 subsequent remarks.

First. The author has not defined the terms
 of his preliminary position. The six planets, re-
 volving round the sun, he affirms to be “ worlds;”
 but, he does not tell us what he means by the
 word. If he intends to assert that the several
 planets are inhabited, like our earth, it must be
 merely assertion, for it is not capable of proof;
 and

* Pages 34, 35, 36, “ Age of Reason.”

and that which it is impossible to prove, never can be admitted as the foundation of argument.

Secondly. The magnitude of the planets, and the immense portion of space they occupy to perform their rotationary circles, are no proofs whatever of their being inhabited. Our earth, being stocked with animals, does not, on that account, annually revolve round the sun, and turn on its own axis. It performs this as an orb, not as an inhabited world.

Thirdly. The fixed stars being placed at a distance beyond the power of calculation, affords no probable proof of their being inhabited worlds; because being so entirely out of the reach of all observation, any thing we affirm about them must be mere conjecture.

Fourthly. The sun is the largest of the celestial orbs; yet Mr. Paine has not mentioned the sun as a *world*, in his sense of the word. If orbs of less magnitude would be incomplete, unless inhabited, it seems a defect in the system that the centre and soul of our universe should be unpeopled. Perhaps Mr. Paine did not know where to find a race of the salamander kind.

Fifthly. Mr. Paine is not correct as to that in which the planets revolve. His words are; "The
" *space*

“ *space* in the *air*, or in the immensity of *space*,
 “ that the solar system takes up for the several
 “ worlds to perform their revolutions in.” Here
 it is first, *air* in which they revolve; and then,
space. This shews that Mr. Paine is not decided
 as to what the nature of the medium is; it is
 sometimes *space*, sometimes *air*; a *plenum*, or a *va-*
cuum, promiscuously.

Sixthly. Mr. Paine says, “ By this easy pro-
 “ gression of ideas, the immensity of *space* will
 “ appear to be *filled* with systems of worlds.”
 This is impossible; because, as these systems of
 worlds, or orbs, do not touch one another, but
 are immensely distant, there must be an immen-
 sity of space between them. So that space is filled,
 but yet there is a prodigious void.

Seventhly. Mr. Paine says, “ Great benefits
 “ arise to man in consequence of the creator
 “ having made a *plurality* of *worlds*. Had there
 “ been only one, the *revolutionary motion* would
 “ not have existed, or not a sufficiency of it to
 “ give us the ideas, and the knowledge of sci-
 “ ence we now have.” It is not true, then, that
 the benefits arise from the plurality of worlds; it
 is from the revolutionary motions; which would
 be the same, whether the planets were inhabited
 or not. A plurality of revolving orbs, not
 worlds,

worlds, is therefore, the true expression. The one is demonstrable; the other conjecture.

Eighthly. The *first* reason assigned by Mr. Paine for a plurality of *worlds*, falls to the ground. He destroys it himself by making the ideas which give birth to science, derived from different bodies, moving in a circle.

Ninthly. The *second* reason of Mr. Paine for a plurality of *worlds*, is not a *reason*, but an *idea*. "A single world rolling, or at rest, in the immense ocean of *space* [just now it was *air*] is a solitary idea; it gives place to the more *cheerful* idea of a *society* of *worlds*." Six orbs composed of inert matter, rolling round a fixed centre, at immense distance from each other, form a *cheerful society*! Do these framers of worlds ever happen to think that other men have common sense?

Here, then, is the demonstrable internal evidence arising from the structure of the universe, against Christianity. What is the amount of it? a *probability* that the planets and fixed stars are inhabited worlds; and, the Christian religion, not having confirmed this *probability* of Mr. Paine, is, therefore, not true. It is as probable that the millions of *worlds* this great philosopher alludes to, may be millions of orbs without, as well as with

with inhabitants; for it is not from their being peopled, that man derives any benefit. As to principles on which calculations respecting the distances, velocity of motion, or extent of circles described by the planets, are made, these are truths, but they are not discoveries. Ascertaining the squares of the distances, which is not a very arduous task, the calculation is as infallible, as the result of any demonstrated problem in Euclid. What of all this? To affect revelation Mr. Paine must prove, that the true system of the universe is contradicted by a false system maintained in the Bible. This he has attempted to do. Not finding a plurality of worlds mentioned in our scriptures, he states the existence of millions as a probability; and thus making nature contradict revelation, he exults in the triumph he derives from this imaginary contradiction. Mr. Paine seems entirely to forget that his book may fall into the hands of reflecting men, with whom probable conjectures will not pass for proofs.

It appears then, that this unerring word of God, or his works in the creation, to which Mr. Paine refers us as the only criterion of truth, philosophical and religious, is as silent on certain subjects comprehended in the system of the universe, as revelation itself. There is nothing in revelation respecting a plurality of inhabited orbs,
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or, as Mr. Paine expresses it, millions of worlds; nor is there any thing in his word of God, the creation, which ascertains the fact; the utmost we arrive at is *probability*. We know there are six revolving orbs attached to the sun, as their circumvolutionary centre. Because one of these six is inhabited, we *suppose* the other five may be peopled with some kind of beings. We discern myriads of resplendant bodies in the hemisphere, and the five nearest us revolving, we *conjecture* that those which are at the greatest distance do the same. We then go a step farther, and *think it probable* that the myriads of luminaries not only revolve, like the planets, but that they are inhabited worlds. All this while Mr. Paine's created word of God, that we are to consider as the only revelation of the truth, reveals not a syllable about the matter; yet, it reveals, Mr. Paine says, "every thing necessary for man to know." Not having divulged any thing respecting millions of inhabited worlds, it was not necessary that man should receive any information on the subject; and, consequently, Mr. Paine has thrown away a great deal of time to very little purpose, in conjecturing about that, of which nature designed he should remain in ignorance. So much for his unerring revelation, that leaves him to the *certainty* of *probability* as to the existence of an infinity of worlds; which infinity of worlds he

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brings

brings forward as "evidence the heavens afford
 "to man, either directly contradictory to the
 "Christian system, or, rendering it absurd *."
 The heavens give no such evidence; the Christian
 system is not, therefore, affected by this bold
 assertion; and Mr. Paine is left to take another
 imaginary excursion through the immensity of
 space, air, or whatever he may chuse to call it †,
 in search of better proof, to satisfy the common
 sense of mankind. I wish him a pleasant ærial
 journey!

Here

* Page 37, "Age of Reason."

† The greatest philosophers, as they are called, have puzzled themselves wonderfully about this imaginary immensity. Some leaving this immensity empty, have called it space; others have filled it, and then it became air. Sir Isaac Newton, after a thousand conjectures, discards the gross word "air," and substitutes the term "*subtile æther*;" which is only air in a very refined state, a spirituous effluvia, as it were, like the phlogiston of the electricians. In the last edition of Newton's Optics, which I believe was published in the year 1727, Sir Isaac reduces the matter to a "*subtile fluid*." This endless conjecture is occasioned by our attempting objects beyond the limits of human capacity. The universe is a little too bulky for the grasp of intellect. When we talk, therefore, of the immensity of space, or air, we ought to mean no more than that it extends infinitely beyond the bounds of human idea to calculate; and there we should leave the matter. To go farther, is only to bewilder ourselves with imaginations, of which there is no end.

Here the mighty proof of Mr. Paine; that which is so overpowerfully convincing, and against which it would be the extreme of folly to contend, appears to me wholly incompetent for the intended purpose. The boastings, therefore, of internal evidence, deduced from the constituted fabric of the universe, amount to mere declamation. Mr. Paine, like the great champion of the Philistines, comes forward, tremendous in menaces; nothing can successfully oppose him, except a nodule directed by the hand of truth.

There are other reasons why "the idea, or belief, of a word of God existing in print, or in writing, or in *speech*, is inconsistent in itself. These reasons, *among many others*, are, the want of an universal language; the mutability of language; the errors to which translations are subject; the *possibility* of totally suppressing such a word;" (what word?) "the *probability* of altering it;" (altering what?) "or of fabricating the whole, and imposing it on the world*." Let us examine these matters.

The first reason, "want of an universal language," happens to be no reason at all, if the original language in which the revelation was conveyed, be existing. The same reason would

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* Page 43, "Age of Reason."

hold against any other book whatever. We might argue, that the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer were not the genuine publications of that sublime bard, because the language in which they are written is not an universal one. The writings of the Old Testament, as we term it, were composed in Hebrew. They exist in the pure biblical Hebrew. The Jews have been, through interest of the most essential nature to themselves, the conservators of those writings; and, it is extremely remarkable, that they should have been so well conserved, during such a long succession of ages. Of this we had proof not many years ago. Doctor Kennicott, of Oxford, undertook to collate the most ancient Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible which could be met with in any part of the world. For this purpose, he employed several learned Jews, whom he sent wherever it was probable a manuscript might be found. The Doctor proceeded several years in this laborious undertaking, and, at the commencement of each succeeding year, he published an account of the several manuscripts discovered; their dates, and state of preservation. Comparing numbers of these letter by letter with the original now adopted by the Jews and Christians, there did not appear any variation which affected the sense, or meaning of a single passage, material in point of fact, principle, doctrine, or precept. There was a difference in reading of a few verses in some chapters in Samuel. This collat-
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ing was carried on during several years, and the death of Doctor Kennicott, only, put an end to it. This is another proof of the extreme tenacity of the Jews, in the care of their scriptures. Having, therefore, the original to which we can refer, every man, by acquiring a knowledge of that original, may render it an universal language as to theological matters, the same as Latin is the universal language of the learned in Europe.

Neither is the "mutability of language" an objection in the present case. The Jewish scriptures once written in Hebrew, and received by the people as of divine origin, could not be altered nor interpolated; because such an act would bring down destruction on those committing it; and, blessings being expected from conserving the book, in which they were promised, in the purity it first appeared, it was the care of every man to see that it was so conserved. The mutable nature of language, therefore, affect not the sacred writings of the Jews. Such as it was in the earliest ages, such we find it in the pure biblical Hebrew at the present day. By ceasing to be a living language, it has not been corrupted. It is only a remark, but yet it has some weight; the Hebrew character itself seems formed for durability. There is a boldness, strength,
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and impression, apparently calculated to exist as long as time.

The "errors to which translations are subject," has as little of reason in it. Of what consequence are the errors of translations, while there is an original to which they may be referred for correction? If there were ten thousand erroneous translations of the Koran of Mahomet*, would that be admitted by a Turk as an objection to his religion, when the faults might be corrected by referring to the Arabic original? Is it any proof that there are no genuine antient medals, because there are such an abundance of the spurious kind? Must we discard originals on account of bad imitations?

We next come to *possibilities* and *probabilities*; which are very favourite reasons with Mr. Paine. They assist him most wonderfully whenever he happens to be at a dead lift. It is "*probable* such a word [he leaves us to guess which] may be suppressed. And it is *possible* the whole may

* Al-Koran, is the Koran; Al, in Arabic, being the same as our definite article "the." The true name of Mahomet is *Mohammed*. Sale's "Translation of the Koran," is by far the best version in our language; and the preliminary discourse prefixed, contains a very learned account of the real and different tenets held by the most enlightened disciples of MOHAMMED.

" may be altered or fabricated *." Were I to speak instead of write, I should be hoarse with telling this gentleman, that here is an original scripture; and it is for him to shew how, when, where, and in what instance, it has been falsified, corrupted, altered, or fabricated. His possible and probable supposes, would go equally against the purest classic author that time has handed down to us. We might reject the *Æneid* of Virgil by suggesting the uncertainty of the work being what it pretends, owing to the mutability of language; the errors of translations; the *possibility* of suppressing some word; and the *probability* of fabricating the whole. If Mr. Paine should not see, the public will feel, that his reasonings, if admitted, would prove too much. That which proves too much, proves nothing. Here, therefore, ends the chapter of reasons against the belief of " a word of God existing in " print or writing."

Neither does it exist " in speech." What is here meant, I freely confess I do not comprehend. A *word* of God not existing in *speech*, is rather an obscure expression. If there be no speech, there are, of course, no words. We are to understand, I presume, a total denial on the part of Mr. Paine, that the deity ever held audible intercourse with man, by the medium of language. " And
" God

* Page 43, " Age of Reason."

“ God spake these words and said.” That, says Mr. Paine, is a lie. Moses was given to lying. He learned the art of it in Egypt. God never spoke a word to man. Be it so. Now for the proof. “ There is no universal language ; language is mutable ; translations are imperfect ; “ a book may be fabricated ; and a word suppressed * :” *Therefore* God never delivered any thing in audible language to man. I hope the reader is content with this proof, because Mr. Paine has not a better to offer.

The “ creation we behold is the real and ever “ existing word of God ; in which we *cannot be* “ *deceived* †.” Creation, a *word*, is rather straining the figure ; but, taking the subject as represented ; what of creation do we behold ? Not in proportion of a part to the whole, as an unit to millions. What have the best glasses done for us ? as much as invention could do to assist the weakness of human vision. But, will Mr. Paine, as a philosopher say, that after all we are not deceived by the view of creation we are enabled to take ? Beyond the reach of our solar system, what know we ? Not any certain truth. Bodies on bodies, suspended in ambient æther ; their magnitude, distance, relations, reciprocity of influence, who can

* Page 43, “ Age of Reason.”

† Page 43, *Ibid.*

can ascertain? We can only conjecture: May we not be mistaken? If we may be mistaken, then we can be deceived in this creation we behold; and, if we can be deceived, it is not that infallible word of God Mr. Paine represents it to be. The approximate system is that of which our earth forms a part. The sun is generally considered as composed of, or perhaps by action and re-action, composing fire. Yet, there have been speculatists, like Mr. Paine, who, resolving to be novel in the ideas they advanced, affirmed the materiality of the sun to be cold. This difference in opinion, on a system which, it is said, we can all behold, proves the system not to be that infallible instructor recommended in the "Age of Reason."

From theology, Mr. Paine advances to morals; and, as he deduces his divinity from an imaginary source, I am afraid his morality, on examination, will not be found to be of better origin. "Seeing, as we daily do, the goodness of God to all men, it is an example calling upon all men, to practice the same towards each other*." This is a miserable begging the question. In what is the goodness of God to *all mankind* daily seen? Is it in cellars, garrets, hovels, cabins, and work-houses, that we are to look for the goodness of

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* Page 43, "Age of Reason."

God, providentially considered? Take the proportion of mankind in civilized states, nine-tenths of them are in misery as to outward condition; hunger and nakedness are their lot. The concomitants are, sorrow and disease. It is not, then, in the private condition that we are to look for the goodness of God to all men; the majority being in wretchedness, form an existing inference against moral goodness; the great principle of which is, distributive munificence apportioned to individual necessity; such a distribution is not observed. There is, consequently, not the example Mr. Paine has stated, "calling upon all men to the same practice towards each other." If he means that the *elementary* power of the creation is manifested equally to all creatures, he is right; the frost chills, and the rain descends, but, poverty-stricken man is defenceless against both: he has not the fur covering to guard him against the one, nor the oiled feathers * of the volatile species, to shake off the other. How, then, from the operating works of creation are we to infer the practice of moral duties towards each other? Self-preservation seems to be the grand animal object throughout creation; and man, descends from his high rank in the scale of being to make it the first of his concerns. He levels himself with the brutes, then talks of the skies.

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* See, Derham's "Physico-Theology."

The moral duty of man towards his fellow-creature, in what does it consist? "Abstinence from persecution and revenge, and not shewing cruelty to animals*." — "Do justice; love mercy; walk humbly with thy God†." Is not this as good, and a more comprehensive maxim than that of Mr. Paine? Was there any necessity that he should obtrude the result of his *sterile* invention on the subject, when better morality had been preached three thousand years ago? The treatment of animals is dictated by our feelings. "A merciful man will be merciful to his beast‡." There requires no reference to the word or works of God in creation to discover, whether a man ought not to abstain from killing an inoffensive animal in his power. As to persecution and revenge among men, I am afraid that a cold survey of Mr. Paine's universe will not deter them from it. There must be some warm actuating motive. Something that feelingly induces us to embrace the family of mankind as brethren, and God as the providential father of the family. "Let him without sin among you cast the first stone§;" is a maxim which puts persecution to the blush. A peep

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* Page 43, "Age of Reason."

† Moses.

‡ The Bible.

§ Jesus Christ.

through a telescope at the ring of Saturn would not have any thing like a similar influence on our mind. The planetary system may occupy our heads, but our hearts, as Young observes, are left disengaged. When Mr. Paine sends us to the "cheering society of his revolving worlds" to learn morality, it is a proof that his idea of instruction is of the rambling kind. A contemplative trip to Jupiter may assist in the solution of an astronomical problem; but, it will not advance us a single progressive step in benevolence to our species. Mathematicians, calculators, and astronomers, have generally been the most unimpassioned men; neither remarkable for the fervor of their piety, nor for any vivid display of philanthropy: Patient investigation seems to have made up the sum total of their virtues*.

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* The study of medical subjects seems the best adapted to excite rational piety in the mind. We accordingly find physicians so forcibly struck with the wonderful arrangements of the several parts of the human body, as to break out in a rapture of devotion on the survey. *Laurence Bellini*, a learned physician, writing on the motion of the heart, thus exclaims: "Ah Deum immortalem! video præsens numen tuum in ipsis
"tam prodigiosis generationis initiis, et in altissima eorum
"contemplatione defixus, nescio quo æstro admirationis conciter, et quasi divine furens cohiberi me minime possum
"quin exclamem ——— Magnus Dominus! magnus fabricator hominum Deus! Magnus atque admirabilis! Conditor
"rerum

The heavens, lecturing us but indifferently in true theology, and still worse in operative morality, or the fraternal love of human kind; the pillars on which Mr. Paine wishes us to rest our belief, and form our directing principles of conduct, are shaken to the foundations: they are insufficient for the support of the superstructure.

Let us fairly meet the case. Men referring to nature merely, for divine instruction, must necessarily be disappointed. Nature presents a fine effect; but she is silent as to the cause that produced her. Could the whole creation speak, no more would it say than that it had received being from an extra-cause. The essence and attributes of that cause, cannot in possibility be known to created existence; it is a discovery which the cause only can impart. We perceive something of the universe. We observe harmony, order, adjustment, motion. This, Mr. Paine will say, implies design; design implies intelligence; and,
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"rerum Deus quam magnus es!" "O immortal God! I discover thee in these such prodigies of generative being. Wholly absorbed in the elevated contemplation of such wonders, I am necessarily impelled to admiration, and a divine ardor, as it were, forces me to exclaim — Great Lord! Great God the former of man Great and wonderful! God the creator of all things how great art thou."

this intelligence, is that being whom we call God, He is the first cause of the heavens, and of innumerable worlds. Here, for concession sake, let us allow Mr. Paine his own doctrine: What is the inference he deduces from this doctrine? "That it is a strange conceit to suppose the Almighty, who has millions of worlds dependent on his protection, should *quit the care of all the rest*, and come to die in one world*." Here is the God of Mr. Paine! an artificer, who cannot quit his station for fear one of his worlds should happen, in his absence, to want repairing, and the whole machinery go to ruin. Like the superintendant of an orrery, or a clock, who inspects the several motions, and adjusts them when out of order: This is the god of Mr. Paine! The fire which the antient Persians worshipped, was a better apology for a divinity †.

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* Page 36, "Age of Reason."

† The Chaldeans paid religious adoration to the sun, moon, and planets, not as orbs, but as the habitations of intelligences of a superior order, through whose intermediation man was to approach God. They had images also, in which they believed the influence and virtues of those intelligences resided, when they did not appear in the heavens. The Persians discarded all images, and substituted FIRE only, as the matter of which all the orbs were composed. This fire was continually burning in their temples. The Magi of the East worshipped LIGHT, as their deity, the cause of all things;

It is thus that a great genius, under the bias of imagination, diverges from the truth. We see what Mr. Paine's ramble through space has brought him to; a machinist, instead of a God; having "*the care of millions of worlds*" on his hands, and, so busily occupied as not to be spared an instant from his post. This bewildering spirit of error must ever prevail, when creation is consulted on subjects about which creation cannot but be silent. If, on beholding a superb building, the idea of an architect suggests itself; the magnificence of the design will only lead us to form an exalted opinion of the genius of the designer. Not any thing can be inferred from the work as to the attributes of his mind: Whether they consist in justice; charity; benevolence; mercy. The greatness of his conceptive powers, we deduce from the sublime effect he caused. There ends the inference. Any thing farther would be conjecture. Creation, as a structure, cannot give us insight into the essential properties of the Godhead. Although the divinity possesses not any thing assimilate to the human

things; and considered *fire* only as the representative of light. This elucidates the conduct of the Magi, or philosophers of the East, who are represented as acting in consequence of a star, or *luminous orb*, they beheld in the heavens, at the birth of Christ.—“We have seen a star, *luminous orb*, and are come to pay adoration.” This resplendent orb, was, to them, an indication of *divinity*.

human affections; yet some of the qualities of those affections, in the pure abstract, may be ascribed to deity. It is here that revelation speaks aloud; where nature is silent. It is in the former we are told that God is love, justice, mercy, benignity, compassion. As qualities, these are entwined around the human heart; and they are the tendrils of the great Vine†. In GOD they are positive perfections. Is an object wanting for the exercise of these perfections? Again revelation speaks, and pronounces that object to be — MAN. What great love can a planet excite in the almighty mind? What justice doth it demand; what mercy can it be shewn; what benignity doth it require; what compassion stands it in need of? Were there millions and millions of planetary worlds, there would still be wanting an object for the exercise of the most endearing perfections of the DIVINITY; unless in some of those worlds, such a being as man should be found. Revelation brings GOD forward as the creator, former, comforter, protector, and friend of man. Thus the divine attributes, power, wisdom, justice, mercy, are on our side. The Creator stands engaged for the happiness of the creature. This relation of our species to the Almighty, which concerns us more than any thing to know, is not to be discovered

† John, Chap. xiv, verse 1.

with. Mine is not a professional faith; it arises from having searched into the evidence at an adult period, unshackled by any church system, and totally unconnected with profession. This search was prosecuted for my own satisfaction; and, going a different way to work from that of Mr. Paine, I arrived at an opposite conclusion. Every man should do the same; for, to use an expression of chancellor Bacon, it is a matter that "comes home to every man's bosom." At my early outset in life I came to this country as one of the suite of lord Bristol, appointed lord lieutenant. He engaged himself to do every thing for me I could wish. After waiting some time for his arrival, a change took place in England, and he was superceded; there began, and there ended my professional views. From that period to the present, I have stood on a different ground. The hand which now holds this pen, and the God who has on a variety of occasions directed it, have been my supporters. My life has been a concatenation of afflictive circumstances; a disastrous series of contingent woes. Loss of property and relatives by fire, singular casualty, and agonizing disease. Nearly a third portion of my existence has been consumed in watching the ceaseless depredations death was making on those most dear to me. Heavy calamities! As
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such they staggered my nature, for we are only men, but they did not shake my reliance. I mentally gravitated to the centre of being, and was sustained by Almighty power in the orbit of life. To have this opportunity of defending, what I most solemnly believe to be the revelation of that Almighty power, affords me consolatory pleasure. It is happiness growing out of misfortune. Good deduced from evil.

I am very conscious of the defects of this production. It is not, in point of argument, so authoritative, nor, in point of style, so polished as it ought to have been. On these accounts I have given it the title of "Observations," rather than an "Answer," to Mr. Paine's work — what I offer in excuse for the imperfections, will be admitted by men of candor. I write in a prison*, after nearly eleven months confinement in a single room; Out of the many books I wanted to consult as authorities, I have only

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been

* It has been reported, that Mr. Paine composed the "Age of Reason," in confinement; but this is a mistake, for the work was at the press before he was committed to the Luxembourg.

been able to procure one. I refer, therefore, from memory to productions which it is several years since I looked into. Had I possessed the necessary aid, I would have brought forward a great deal of that species of evidence which, to me at least appears, incontestible. What Mr. Paine calls reasoning, I consider as *speculation*; and, it is not by speculating that books of antiquity are to be established or overthrown; They should be treated as antient records; requiring concurring testimony to authenticate, and collateral helps to explain them.

With respect to the style of this piece, I candidly confess that there was not any labour bestowed in the embellishment of it. Pertinent observations, conveyed in as plain language as the nature of the subject would bear, were the objects aimed at. The graces of composition, like a beauty richly attired, are allurements to captivate; truth simply arrayed, is best qualified to convince.

Such, then, as the work is, I with great deference submit it to the candor and indulgence of the Irish nation; of which my paternal and maternal ancestors were centuries ago; from which
I sprang;

I sprang; and for the real happiness of which I
offer an ardent prayer to HIM — who disposeth
the fate of empires.

WILLIAM JACKSON.

Newgate,
DUBLIN, *March 7th.*
1795.



